DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 374 645 FL 022 097

TITLE	Language, Culture, and Identity.
INSTITUTION	Wisconsin Center for Educational Research, Madison. National Center for Effective Schools.
PUB DATE	94
NOTE	21p.
PUB TYPE	Collected Works - Serials (022)
JOURNAL CIT	Focus in Change; n14 Spr 1994
EDRS PRICE	MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS	Academic Standards; *Acculturation; Curriculum Design; Elementary Secondary Education; English (Second Language); *Immigrants; *Language Maintenance; *Language Role; Limited English Speaking; *Minority Groups

ABSTRACT

This theme issue, devoted to the relationship between language, culture, and identity, contains three articles, all by Anne Turnbaugh Lockwood, and a commentary by Florence L. Johnson. The first article, entitled "The Heart of Culture," reports on an interview with Henry T. Trueba, an educator specializing in the roles of language, culture, and identity in the schooling of language minority children. In it, the experience of immigrants in a new society is examined and the ideal bilingual education experience is discussed. "Coming to America" profiles a Mexican immigrant boy who grows to manhood in the United States and copes successfully with the challenges of maintaining his native language and learning and new language and culture, and then became an elementary school teacher. "Language, Culture, and Education" presents the story of one elementary school teaching an increasingly diverse student population, using creative solutions to difficult challenges. Florence Johnson's commentary and review of literature focuses on three concerns about schooling in the United States: (1) how teachers' perceptions, expectations, and educational practices are influences by children's race, culture, language, and social class; (2) the effects of these on student outcomes; and (3) what schools can do to create positive experiences for children. (MSE)

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Focus in Change

The National Center for Effective Schools
Spring 1994 No. 14

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FOCUS IN CHANGE

THE NATIONAL CENTER FOR EFFECTIVE SCHOOLS SPRING 1994 NO. 14

Language, Culture, and Identity

What is the role schools should play in the education of language minority children? What responsibility, if any, do schools have to ensure that children maintain their native culture and language? What sorts of educational experiences can ease the transition for language minority children into American schools and society?

In this issue of *Focus in Change*, we turn our attention to a controversial topic: the education of language minority children. In doing so, we seek a greater understanding of some of the complicated issues that underpin this topic in the hope that this will illuminate the sort of learning environment in which language minority children can succeed.

It is an immutable fact that the numbers of children for whom English is not a native language are an ever-burgeoning population in American schools. Districts and individual schools—even in small communities—must confront the instructional dilemmas posed by children from a wide range of language groups. No longer can school staff consider language minority children to be the exclusive property of urban schools and therefore, a population about which someone else must make important decisions. Language minority children are here to stay—as has been the tradition in the United States.

But there are important differences between immigrants today and previous immigrants. It is much more difficult to succeed in our high-tech society than it was in pre-World War II society. Gaining fluency in English does not alone ensure success, since many—if not most—language minority children come from cultures very different from mainstream American culture.

This poses the need for educators to achieve a powerful cognitive shift: to accept the need to accept the cultures from which language minority children come, and to embrace the imperative to work through that understanding to help language minority children ease their way into a new language and culture—while retaining their heritage. Although many Americans still hold an assimilationist view, that is, immigrants must meld into "mainstream" society, learn English, and abide by mainstream norms and values, others question whether this view is either practical or humane—or indeed, whether it ever was.

Therefore, we ask: How is language linked with culture? Isn't it enough to learn English and merge into mainstream, middle-class American society? Is it the school's role to facilitate this, or is the school's role something different? Why is it important for educators to accept and understand the cultures of children from different countries? In short, we are asking why we, as educators, must join the change process to meet the newcomers to our schools.

We decided to approach this topic from a variety of perspectives. First, we consult with Henry T. Trueba, an internationally recognized authority on language, culture, and identity—and the role schooling plays in educating language minority children. Trueba, who is Dean of the School of Education at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, speaks forcefully about the linkage between language and culture, the need to understand and accept the cultures from which children come, and finally, his vision of the type of learning environment—rare and precious as it may be—in which all children can thrive and succeed.

Additionally, we were curious about how it feels to be an immigrant in the 1990s. We find out through the story of Alfredo Hernández, who has lived in the United States for thirteen years since coming to this country from Mexico at the age of thirteen. Hernández is now a teacher of bilingual education in Milwaukee, Wisconsin—and he talks candidly about the pain of culture shock, the struggle to assimilate and yet retain his own culture and language, and the lingering feelings of being an outsider in American culture, although by any measure he is clearly a success story.

Finally, we look at some ways in which one school has created a learning environment for five different language minority groups—along with native English-speaking children. Adel Nadeau, principal of Linda Vista Elementary School in San Diego, California, reviews the innovative program developed in the last seven years and discusses the challenges posed by the student population's diversity. She points to the strength of Linda Vista's lively parent education component and the community-wide focus on multiculturalism that has helped make their school program a success.

We highlight the complexity of this topic with a large selection of additional readings carefully culled from the extensive literature, and we conclude with the comments of Florence L. Johnson, NCES Director, who discusses her view of education for language minority children.

"It is all right to retain the first language—through it the child might be able to find his way into the new language."

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THE HEART OF CULTURE

WHY is it important to understand the intersection of language and culture? Is it imperative to attend to the needs of language minority students with bilingual education programs? What does an ideal program look like? We posed these and other questions to Henry T. Trueba, an internationally recognized authority on language, culture, and identity—and their roles in schooling for language minority children.

Trueba is Dean of the School of Education at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, a position he has held since 1991 (where he is also Professor in the Departments of Curriculum and Instruction, Educational Policy Studies, and Anthropology). He holds an M.A. from Stanford and a Ph.D. from the University of Pittsburgh. He also has held academic appointments in schools of education at the University of Illinois and the University of California (Santa Barbara and Davis). He is the recipient of numerous awards for his research on language minority students from the American Educational Research Association and the National Association for Bilingual Education.

The editor of several journals, Trueba has written and co-authored many books, articles, and reviews. His most recent books include Healing Multicultural America: Mexican Immigrants Rise to Power in Rural California *and* Myth or Reality: Adaptive Strategies of Asian Americans in California *(both Falmer Press, 1993). A member of the Advisory Council to the Education Transition Team of President-Elect Clinton, he also is a nominee for the President's Advisory Commission on Education Excellence for Hispanic Americans.*

FOR THOSE WHO SEE the acquisition of English as the sole pathway to success in the United States, Henry Trueba sounds a strong, cautionary message: Culture, he says, is the heart of language, and any sensible program of language instruction for language minority students cannot be divorced from a thorough understanding—and acceptance—of the student's home culture.

"Anything dealing with how we communicate with one another," Trueba points out, "is determined by different cultures. In the context of studying how people transition from one language to another, we often neglect the fact that they also are in a transition from one cultural environment to another that is very different."

He lists examples. "They may be coming from a rural to an urban environment, from a very socio-economically deprived ghetto life to a middle-class suburban life. We assume the reason they cannot communicate or function effectively in the school or in the community is because they do not understand the language. But they also do not understand the culture: why something is done, and what is appropriate behaviorally."

The most important factor in working with children who speak another language, Trueba insists, is understanding and accepting their backgrounds and cultures. "It is important to know where they come from."

To Trueba, a vivid example of clashing cultures is shown by a migration of about 30,000 non-English speaking people who came from Chiapas (Mexico) to Los Angeles. "They went directly from the mountains, a tropical area, to the ghetto in Los Angeles. They are experiencing shock." He adds with vehemence, "Their problems with the English language are *manifested* in their lack of ability to communicate with English speakers, but actually they do not have problems with the English language per se.

"Instead, their problems are due to a very drastic sociocultural change. For instance, they will let a child walk in the streets alone, because in the mountains an eight-year-old is responsible for siblings and such behavior is appropriate. It is not dangerous.

"They do all sorts of things that we consider inappropriate in our culture. The same pattern exists with the Hmong, with some Vietnamese, and with other groups."

Understanding what appear to be inappropriate behaviors lies at the core of language instruction, he maintains. "Language is the heart of culture. Language is almost the quintessence of thought, of cognitive domains," he says with passion. "It is very hard to separate cognitive domains without knowledge. Once you know what is inside—fundamentally, how you label things you see every day and how you express yourself about them—you also acquire a notion of how to behave in the setting in which you are in."

For example, it would not occur to most English-speaking children in the United States that it is not appropriate to touch a stone because of its magic properties. But as Trueba explains, a two-year-old in Xalacapan, Puebla (Mexico) might learn that a piece of rock is not only a stone but also a magic stone that one cannot touch because a touch will result in severe consequences. "Language is never taught or learned in the abstract," Trueba emphasizes, "but in the context of behavior."

Behaviors that make sense in one cultural context often do not translate to another, Trueba stresses, and the result can be devastating—even permanently damaging—to language minority children. "Language minority

children often behave in ways that do not receive the proper responses when transplanted to a different culture."

He enlarges, "In this society, we classify them. We say: 'They are unable to function. They are disabled.' Sometimes we store them away, sometimes we work with them. In working with them we also send messages: 'You are disabled; I have to help you.' We speak very loudly to them. The children receive many meta-messages that make them feel stupid. Some of them fight back, some of them don't. There are instances where some totally close their worlds and become almost catatonic. To get them back into reality is very difficult and is a very serious problem."

Earlier Immigrants' Experiences

If this is the case for today's language minority children, what about the history of immigrants upon which the United States is built? How were previous immigrants fifty or one hundred years ago able to assimilate without special programs geared to ease their transition? According to Trueba, although the American public tends to think of earlier immigrants only in terms of success stories that tell of triumph over adversity, not all the life stories of earlier European immigrants are positive. He notes that much of the pain experienced by earlier immigrants was not acknowledged fully even by themselves in the press to assimilate.

"There was a pecking order," he observes. "Often, the ridicule one person in the family received was related to everyone in the family. Even the kids that never saw a real situation where someone was humiliated knew about it, and knew about the pain.

"I interview a lot of Hmong children in the Indo-Chinese community, and I see this currently. People in that community will tell me stories that they have heard about other people's pain, but they are as moved as if it is their own."

To further confound the picture of immigration and assimilation, Trueba stresses that the history of immigration in the United States is one that is tainted with racism. "In the last century, intelligence tests were used to calculate percentages of Europeans who were less qualified. In that way, they were able to reduce the quotas, because they could say that only 80% of some group, such as Poles, would qualify to enter America. Quotas were used to select the top or smartest immigrants (60 to 80%) on the assumption that only those selected could compare with mainstream Americans. The assumptions behind those tests were totally wrong. It was part of an international racism that was very prevalent.

"There are still groups of people who refuse to track their ancestry because they are afraid they may discover that they belong to groups that were not high-status. That rejection of ancestry is much worse among people of color."

Trueba recollects poignant observations from his experience. "I have seen children come into school with powder on their faces, trying to pretend they were white. Others would wash their faces in milk to be lighter. This was widespread among the Chicanos. Many of them will tell you—even those who are very light-skinned today—that those first years when they were separate and mistreated because they were from Mexican families, they never really recovered. They have a very profound hatred against whoever is the Anglo."

The pain frequently associated with assimilation endures, he says. "Some people create amnesia about their experiences; some create blinders to prevent more pain. In the long term the blinders do not work well because some events will trigger the original pain.

"It is so important to realize," he says with vehemence, "that the issue of school achievement is not an issue of being stupid or not. It is an issue of being able to adapt to an environment perceived as very hostile without ever understanding that it is all right to be different, it is all right to retain the first language, and through it the child might be able to find his way into the new one."

Researchers have studied the phenomenon of children who lose their first language but do not satisfactorily learn a second language. How can this occur? "Very easily," Trueba replies. "Unless the mother tongue is fully developed before trying to learn the English language or unless the first language is learned concomitantly with the second language, a child will not be able to retain the first language. I meet quite a few people today who retain a few sentences in Spanish that are very appropriate for certain emotional situations. After that, they have nothing. But many of them learn their first language as adults because they want to prove to themselves that they were loyal to their ethnicity. It is a very painful process, and it is very hard to acquire a second language without developing the first."

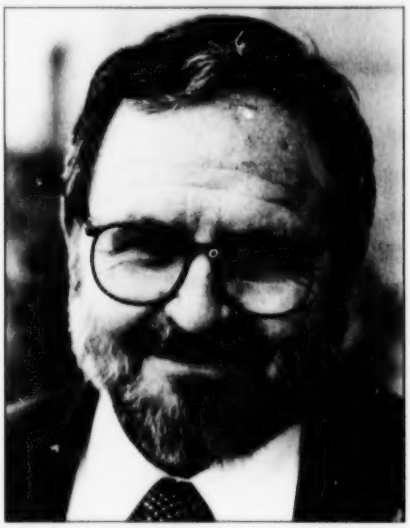
What variables influence language acquisition? "The age of the child, the home environment, what we call linguistic accountability—the amount of language spoken by adults to a child," Trueba responds. "In many societies people learn by looking and doing; much is implied. In American society, because we wrongly assume that a child's home language does not have a role, we also assume that if she invests in Spanish, she won't learn English. But when children lose the first language they are left with nothing to pin down the new one. They have to relearn all the structures of language. It is much easier to learn both, or to go back and forth until the child knows what is happening."

How are linguistic minority children defined or diagnosed in the US? Trueba replies, "The ranges of

language minority children go from one and a half million children to about five million. Probably about three million children definitely need assistance to acquire the second language and are not fluent when they come to school."

Some children appear to be orally fluent but actually have little to no understanding of what they are saying, Trueba adds. "In California, children take achievement tests in third to sixth grade. It is clear that many children do not understand the semantic domains of language. The proficiency level goes down as they get older, but it should increase. The truth is that it was always low, but children reach a point where they don't try, when the subject becomes very technical."

Further compounding the difficulty of reaching proficiency in a second language are the differences and nuances inherent in any language and especially intricate in some. "It might take a very long time before one realizes that he has been saying something wrong all along and never knew it. An issue with language minority children is how much you correct their language, and what language patterns are the most appropriate."



"Language is the heart of culture." HENRY T. TRUEBA

But of all the thorny problems facing educators working with language minority children in their schools, the most complex is the dilemma of instructing language minority children who speak many different languages. What do school districts do when confronted by multiple languages spoken by a myriad of different language minority children? "In some schools there are 25 different languages," Trueba points out, "and school staff learn much better what to do than in ones where there are one or two other languages. When working with one or two languages, they tend to get an aide and work with the aide on the second language. When they must deal with 25 different languages, they tend to solve the problem by creating concentrations in different schools. In that way they focus their activities on the largest groups and then attend to the smaller groups on a one-to-one basis with aides."

He sighs. "The solution is never easy, but taking care of the largest groups is not so difficult. For the most part, you have enough textbooks in their language and are able to offer instruction in their language. Also, this type of instruction will not go on forever. It's critical at the beginning of school, but it doesn't have to penetrate the subject matter. Overall, it is important to understand what is happening with these children, where they come from, what their level of knowledge is, what the level of interest in the home is, what kind of traumas they have had before they arrived, and what their needs are—from nutrition to whatever."

The school functions best when it is not working in isolation from the home, Trueba emphasizes. "The home environment is crucial. Some of the most interesting work is done by HOW, an organization of Mexican parents who work to help monolingual Spanish-speaking parents, giving practical assistance on how to work with their children in Spanish on the subject matter being taught in school."

Trueba notes, "They even teach them how to ask the teacher different things, giving the question in Spanish so the child begins to learn the process of inquiring, pursuing knowledge, making inferences. This is the most important support language minority children can get at home. Without it, the child will never survive. Unfortunately, it doesn't happen in enough families due to no one being at home because both parents work."

Regardless of the home's role, the school functions as the gate to success, and the teachers as the gatekeepers. "Teachers will tell kids, 'You have no chance at that career.' The child may say, 'But I want to be a lawyer.' The teacher will respond, 'You stay here.' "

He reflects, "That happens. The schools become the gatekeepers; they have the power to knock you down. There is no second chance."

The reality of bilingual instruction in the United States is that it continues to be a political and practical struggle. "For the most part, 60 to 70 percent of language minority children are quickly disposed of. They take classes and don't understand anything that is going on. If the child talks to someone in his own language to find out what has happened, he is penalized. These experiences minimize the opportunities of language minority children to adjust to the culture, before they begin to learn.

"Beyond that, the fact that children

Photo: Jeff Miller

are not given a chance to communicate with the speakers of their own language about subject matter, to ask tough questions before they go on, puts them in a continuous state of withdrawal and shock. When they reach sixth or eighth grade, they will drop out. The child has internalized his school experience in a way that makes him feel stupid."

Much of what Trueba relates runs contrary to American democratic ideals, and he acknowledges the dissonance between democratic ideals and reality, referring to the seminal work of George and Louise Spindler. "The Spindlers began to explain school failure as an engineered process. In other words, there is no chance that everybody will succeed. We want to maintain a very idealistic position about schooling in American society. Everybody has a chance in a democracy, but in real life we know it is different. It is not as overt as in Germany or in Belgium, where if you are Chinese or Turk or Moroccan you will never be European and school is not for you."

The Vision of Bilingual Education

What vision does Trueba possess for bilingual education? "My idea of schooling would take place in a very special learning environment," he responds thoughtfully. "It has to be a very rich environment in which more than one language to communicate knowledge is allowed. There is no penalty in this environment for taking mathematics or science in the language you know best. Also, it is an environment in which children are not given just regular content, but they are enriched."

He refers to experiments done with Portuguese-speaking children at Boston University. "They discovered that most of the Portuguese-speaking kids had been labeled totally disabled, but when they began to work with computers in their own language they produced books and were literate at an analytical level that was higher than their English-speaking counterparts.

"Another aspect of this learning environment is that it would allow children who are not comfortable in their own language to move to the second language without penalty, but with a hope that they can remain bilingual. Sometimes they are so pressured to speak only English.

"Teachers in this environment would be truly bicultural or multicultural, meaning that they understand the behavior of other groups rather than passing judgment. They also need to be well-trained, know how to interact with kids and when to be flexible.

"Finally, the content of the communication in the classroom would include the level of comfort the children have in the initial stages so that they are not moved at a pace that is too fast. These characteristics *do* exist in some institutions, but not in very many."

Is there a labeling effect that results from placement in a bilingual education program? "That phenomenon definitely exists in schools where the bilingual education programs are low-status programs," Trueba acknowledges. "Some of Gary Orfield's work indicates that the prejudice against minority groups affects the parents so that there is added impact upon the children, who never can be in a truly neutral environment. If they try to keep the home language, they will be persecuted; even their parents would be against it.

"The whole notion that language is an either-or proposition is misguided," he continues. "To some extent, this feeling of discrimination is happening now with the so-called modern minorities, Chinese and Japanese. For instance, some children feel discriminated against because they retain their home language through Saturday school."

How does Trueba respond to the often-leveled charge that many people's ancestors came to this country, assimilated, and no special educational efforts were targeted towards them? "The truth," he says immediately, "is that we idolize the past. Those immigrants suffered so much that we know now that we were very cruel to them. We should have helped them. Other groups like the Germans were strong politically and didn't suffer as much. In this society until the Second World War, people could succeed with relatively low levels of education. Today, in an industrial society, some of those immigrants would make it, and others would not.

"Some of the most recent immigrants who have come from very low literacy levels have a very difficult time because of the demands of schools and society. If we don't make an effort to assist these groups," he says emphatically, "we are going to lose many of them—in their own generation.

"But another issue is the amount of money invested in bilingual programs. We affect less than one percent of those children who need help, and we invest more in the English-only movement. That money should be used to teach English to the parents of the language minority kids, so they could more effectively support their children, and of course, it should also be used primarily on the children."

Trueba reflects a moment, then adds thoughtfully, "The politics that surround the maintenance of the home language have been tough. Bilingual education has been going back and forth between the extremes of English-only versus maintenance of the home language with the purpose of moving toward the second language. Many groups believe that tax monies should not be used to advocate for any groups. But money to help the transition of people from other language groups will have an immediate effect upon achievement."

He concludes firmly: "Yes, we have to give that help to the children." ♣

ALFREDO HERNANDEZ IN HIGH SCHOOL

This is Alfredo Hernández's story—a story about language barriers, culture shock, and a young immigrant's will to cope and persevere.

It is a success story.

COMING TO AMERICA

ON snowy winter mornings when Alfredo Hernández has playground duty at the Milwaukee elementary school where he teaches sixth grade, the sight of children diving from snow mounds onto the backs of their peers can trigger sharp memories.

"Some of the tougher kids would pick on us on the playground. I was scared to go home at the end of school," Hernández says in a softly accented voice. "I couldn't understand it. Why were they bothering us?"

Today, of course, Hernández knows the answer to his question: He and his brothers and sisters were different from the native-born teenagers who baited them: they spoke a different language, they came from a different country, and they were strangers in an alien culture.

Hernández's family immigrated to Milwaukee from a rural area of Mexico when he was thirteen years old. He explains the story of his family's immigration in terms familiar to many generations of Americans who have immigrated from other countries: the desire to have a better life. "My dad was searching for opportunity," he says. "They decided to come here because they had some relatives in Wisconsin."

The third oldest in a family of ten children, Hernández and his family had difficult times. "I give my parents credit for being able to keep on," Hernández says. "It's tough trying to raise so many kids. But one of the things that made it a little better were the times when we got together. That's what kept us going through those tough times."

He explains that his brothers and sisters shared his experiences, went to the same schools, yet everyone dealt with them differently. "Maybe the younger ones have forgotten about it. It's like a permanent scar for me, but maybe they don't remember." He adds, "I never ask them about it."

Now, at age twenty-six, he is a success story by anyone's standards: he holds a bachelor's degree from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, teaches sixth grade at Allen-Field Elementary School in Milwaukee, and is completely bilingual in Spanish and English. Yet his success comes with a companion: gnawing memories of culture shock and lingering doubt that he will ever fit totally into American society, a belief that some part of him may always remain an outsider.

"When I first came here it was very difficult because I didn't know the language," Hernández remembers. "I was shocked by the culture because it was totally different. I had never seen so many colors of people before. The weather, obviously, was very difficult to adjust to. The city was very different, seeing so many people in one place."

The press to assimilate into a different culture and a different language was constant, he says. "I heard it all my life," he says wearily. " 'Speak English! You are in America! You should learn to speak English and forget about your language!' "

School and stores were rough places to be, he says. "It was worse when I used to go to the store. And it was always present in the classroom and in the streets. There was always pressure from other people, who almost pushed us to forget our own language."

Hernández agrees that newcomers need to learn English. That, to him, is not even debatable. But his memories of small cruelties that surrounded his experiences as a language minority child, new to the United States, cling to him like scar tissue.

"My experiences are still there when I'm speaking with somebody who is different from me. I'm not conscious of it all the time, but sometimes I do feel like people see you in a different way because maybe you have a slight accent or your color is different, your hair is different," he reflects.

"Maybe when I'm speaking in front of people they think I am not smart because I don't speak as well as they do or am just different in some ways. I see kids in the classroom who are new arrivals to the country and they are perceived to be not as smart as the other kids. Some people only tend to see the negative aspects of a person who is different."

When he came to Milwaukee and entered school, Hernández was not placed in a bilingual classroom. His father insisted the children learn English to cope with American society, but was adamant that they speak Spanish at home. "My dad always felt we should learn English because we were going to need it."

But aside from parental encouragement to learn English outside the home, Hernández's parents both worked long hours to support the family. Their knowledge of—and involvement with—American schooling necessarily was limited. Today he realizes the power that parental involvement can have.

"There are parents who are educated and their priority is to see their kids well-educated," he says somewhat wistfully. "They get involved because they can help, they can speak the language. When you have parents like mine, there isn't much they can do, although they can encourage you.

"The kind of help I got from my parents was encouragement. We never spoke English in the home. We always spoke Spanish because my parents didn't understand English. We still speak Spanish in the house."

This household rule permeates Hernández's present language behavior. "Every time I meet somebody who is Spanish, I always speak Spanish before

using English. If I know this person doesn't speak Spanish, I switch. It's a type of respect."

Many of Hernández's friends lost their fluency in Spanish and now are trying to regain it. "What I always hear from them," he says, "is that Spanish was looked upon to be not a very good language to know. You should try to lose it and learn English. People are going to criticize you; you are not going to be very important if you speak Spanish. What I hear from these people is that their parents didn't encourage them to speak Spanish because they were going to be criticized for it. They didn't practice Spanish; they forgot their language. Now those same people are trying to go back into their first language."

Although Hernández has retained his Spanish, he feels empathy with those who have lost their first language, believing that they have lost an integral part of themselves. "Language is such a big part of culture," he insists. "When you lose your language, you lose contact with everything else. If I don't know Spanish and I'm Hispanic, why should I bother to care for other aspects of my culture?" He sees his friends who have lost their first language as victims of a pervasive "either-or" philosophy that dominates language instruction in the United States.

However, Hernández is able to find something positive in his experiences. "It is one of the reasons I went into teaching. As I was going through school, I didn't dream of going to college," he says matter-of-factly. "That was beyond my plan. I was the first one in my family to graduate from high school. That was a big accomplishment for me. Graduating from college was a bigger accomplishment."

Today, Hernández carries his beliefs into his bilingual sixth-grade classroom of thirty children, twenty-five of whom are language minority at differing levels of language proficiency. "Some are more dominant in English; others are just the opposite. At our school we have different reading groups in the same grade level."

Although he has concerns about tracking, he admits that practical concerns dominate the organization of the class. "If I had the choice, I would choose whole language instruction," he says, "but when you have thirty kids you have too many to implement whole language."

"When you lose your language, you lose contact with everything else."

—ALFREDO HERNÁNDEZ

Some children who are dominant in oral Spanish can only read English and vice versa, he says, presenting special challenges to him as a teacher. "What we see in the schools, especially bilingual schools, is that we are not working with the parents. Some of the parents have their kids in bilingual schools starting with kindergarten. As they move on, by the second or third grade, some of the parents are already thinking about pulling them out and trying to transfer them to a different school. They don't see how bilingual education works. Maybe we should try to educate parents about bilingual education before they make a mistake like that."

He explains that bilingual instruction begins with the first language and does not introduce English until the second year of instruction. If children are transferred prior to this shift to English, he points out that they will struggle in a school where there is no bilingual instruction. "They haven't made the transition to English, and are behind. That is okay because that is the way bilingual education works. You begin with the native language and that is the means of communication. The kids learn about their culture. By the time they get to second grade they begin to be taught in English."

But many parents do not understand the pace and goals of bilingual eucation. "I've seen some cases where the parents try to transfer the kids to another school because there may be a problem in the inner city. When you try to pull out a student who is in third grade and place him in a monolingual class, she or he is not on the same reading level as every kid who was instructed in English because this student was only instructed in Spanish. Many parents complain that their kids don't do well in a different school, but they chose to transfer them out of a bilingual program." Hernández checks himself mid-comment and returns to the legacy of his experiences.

He says softly, "It is okay that my experiences didn't go away. As a teacher I can help a lot of kids by remembering those things. I try to reach out to the kids who remind me of my childhood, those kids who need more attention. So in a way, it's okay to remember."

WHAT is the character of instruction in a learning environment that is structured carefully to accommodate different student language groups simultaneously? How can the widely varying needs of such a diverse population be met by school staff? How does a school reconfigure itself to take on parent education, instruction for different language minority groups, as well as active community outreach?

What follows is the story of one school that is teaching an increasingly diverse language minority population —with creative solutions to what otherwise could be seen as large problems. Through the eyes of Adel Nadeau, principal of Linda Vista Elementary School in San Diego, California, we focus on the evolution of their instruction program for language minority students. Nadeau has devoted her educational career to bilingual education. Bilingual herself in English and Spanish, she became the principal of Linda Vista seven years ago. She is the co-author (with Ofelia Miramontes) of Second Language Learning: A Decision-Making Model, *a forthcoming book to be published by Teachers College Press. Linda Vista Elementary School has been designated a "Break the Mold" school with the National Alliance for School Restructuring. It is also recognized by Apple Computer as an "Apple Classrooms of Tomorrow" school.*

Some school staff might view a student population comprised primarily of immigrant Vietnamese, Hmong, Laotian, and Hispanic students—along with a smaller number of monolingual English-speaking white and African American students—as an overwhelming situation, further complicated by the students' socioeconomic standing—95% qualify for free or reduced lunch. In fact, the varying needs of this student population might leave staff wondering where to begin.

But at Linda Vista Elementary School in San Diego, California, this student population comprises a learning environment where diversity is celebrated rather than dreaded.

For the past seven years, Linda Vista has been meeting its students' needs through an intricate, innovative program of English language instruction provided for five language groups—primarily Southeast Asian children—along with a bilingual education program for Spanish-speaking youngsters. The school serves approximately 1,000 students, Pre-Kindergarten through grade 6, on two campuses. As Adel Nadeau, Linda Vista's principal, explains, 95% of students qualify for free or reduced lunch; 75% are limited English speakers or non-English proficient.

"We have a large concentration of Southeast Asian youngsters," Nadeau says, "the largest group being Hmong, followed by Laotian, Vietnamese, Hispanic, and some white and African American children."

Indeed, the student population's diversity is dazzling, if not overwhelming—which has resulted in the school's overarching mission to understand and accept others' cultures, Nadeau points out—a mission intended not just for school staff but for students as well.

"The goal of bilingual education obviously should be the development of high-level English language skills," she observes, "but also the development of the primary language so that the student develops English well and also becomes fully bilingual and biliterate."

However, this philosophy collided with reality at Linda Vista. "Although the primary language is a major vehicle for the learning of a second language," Nadeau says, "we knew we could not develop literacy in the Southeast Asian languages because we did not have the staff, materials, or resources. We had to consider what we *could* do. We do have full bilingual programs for Spanish-speaking youngsters, and we have designed an extensive Sheltered English program for Southeast Asian language groups."

The Reality of Instruction

How did the program come into being? Nadeau says candidly, "When I became principal about seven years ago, the school was a mess. We started the whole process of change, deciding to embark on a developmental, nongraded program with an obvious focus on English language arts for the development of English language skills and primary language development."

The program was carefully constructed to stretch the most out of the school schedule. Students are assigned to an age grouping, such as Early Childhood, Primary, Middle, or Upper. Within the age groupings, students are assigned to one of six levels of English language proficiency. Nadeau clarifies the levels. "One is an entry level, then a Sheltered A level, a Sheltered B level, a designation called transition which is further divided into two levels, and then a regular English program."

To Nadeau, one of the program's strengths is that children may move ahead in English through the six proficiency levels as soon as they are ready. "We constructed it this way to avoid tracking," she notes. "As Spanish-speaking youngsters began entering the school in recent years, we implemented bilingual classes as well. They are taught to read, write, and do math in Spanish as they are learning English."

Rather than abandoning the goal of

instructing Southeast Asian students in their own languages, the staff decided to offer social studies in the students' primary languages. "We had a cadre of aides who spoke the languages, so we recruited two language-certificated teachers. We chose to teach social studies in the primary languages of the children because it can be taught orally, and it is laden also with concepts and vocabulary."

The mornings are devoted to students working in language-proficiency and age-specific groups, but in the afternoon the face of instruction changes completely. "Students get their basic subjects in the morning from their homeroom teacher: reading, language arts, math, and social studies. But we wanted to be sure that we provided equity of services for kids, and an opportunity for them to interact with one another."

As a result, the afternoon instruction is heterogeneously grouped; children are mixed by ethnicity, linguistic groups, and gender. "Within the afternoon schedule we've created a type of mini-secondary program. Teachers choose a subject of their choice to teach for the year, and the kids rotate two different periods a day every ten days. This cycles four times a year.

"For example, a child might take science and fine arts for ten days with two different teachers, and then go to P.E. and geography with two other teachers for the next ten days."

Nadeau reports satisfaction with this arrangement. "By being so creative with the schedule, we designed new offerings for kids based on the needs of our population. It is a student-centered program that has moved away from traditional kinds of instruction."

What does instruction look like at Linda Vista? "If you visited, you would see very little of the teacher at the front of the room and the kids in their seats," Nadeau replies. "Instead, kids are moving around doing projects, and there are many cooperative groups where children are learning from one another."

In the Sheltered English program for Southeast Asian children in the mornings, instruction is provided by what Nadeau calls "native mono-English-speaking teachers. Their responsibility is to make sure that the English language program is conducted. But a certificated Hmong and Laotian-speaking teacher, along with a Vietnamese-certificated teacher and a cadre of aides, are under their direction. These teachers and aides are not assigned to classrooms."

> *"From the beginning, we have implemented a massive program of parent education."*

She provides an example. "For instance, when it is time for social studies, the kids are regrouped by native language, and they go to these certificated instructors who provide the social studies instruction, but they do so under the direction of these two teachers."

Non-Traditional Assessment

How are students assessed? How do teachers know when students are ready to move to the next language proficiency level? In her reply, Nadeau focuses on non-traditional forms of assessment developed as an integral part of the instructional scheme. "Once we decided to have a non-graded developmental program," she replies, "we knew we wouldn't be able to assess children in the traditional way, although we are required to administer standardized tests for the district and the state. We decided to do something very different."

Interested in the principles underpinning authentic assessment, the staff worked for a while with outside consultants, decided their focus needed to be language arts, and then worked cooperatively to develop language arts standards and learner outcomes for each of the six language proficiency levels, with a seventh level for bilingual Spanish, in the content areas of reading, writing, and oral language.

"It took two years to develop them," Nadeau remembers, "and the entire staff—including classified staff—were involved." She adds parenthetically that the number of certificated teachers at Linda Vista is approximately 50, with 60 to 70 classified staff.

After developing standards, the staff plotted how the standards would be measured, deciding to focus on portfolio assessment.

"We created a document which is now our basic guide," she says, "which contains the standards and the rubrics."

She explains, "A rubric is a descriptor. Instead of giving a child a grade or a number, we give her a rubric which describes where she is in terms of her ability to read and write. For example, a child is a developing writer or an inexperienced writer or an emergent writer, and then we provide an explanation of those terms."

The staff then created their own progress report form, apart from the district's, which they call a "growth record." Nadeau explains, "It has no letters and no grades. Essentially, those descriptors are on it, and the teacher checks those to indicate whether the child has met the standards."

A hefty grant from the Nabisco Cor-

poration, in connection with the New American Schools Development Corporation, enabled staff to place student portfolios on computer so that hard copies could be generated for parents at rating periods.

Parent Involvement

Parent involvement is a key component of the program's success. "We have three community aides who are paid for with Chapter 1 funds," Nadeau says. "Each aide speaks one of the languages of the community, and is a community leader. Our governance structure plays into this too, because one of the school committees is parent outreach.

"From the beginning, we have implemented a massive program of parent education, which we present four times a year in five languages simultaneously. We also offer parenting classes, and we have a huge parent volunteer program."

She adds, "None of this existed seven years ago."

Although Linda Vista does not have what Nadeau terms "a traditional PTA," parents learn how to assist their children or interact with them on their homework through the school-provided parent education program. "We did a parent education workshop on the new report card that we have. In the last workshop we held, parents helped us develop some holistic learner outcomes. We worked with the question: 'What do you want your child to look like when she leaves Linda Vista?' " Parents work in small, language-specific groups moderated by a presenter who is fluent in the language of the group.

What about those children who are not language minority children? What is their role in the school's specialized instructional program? Nadeau points out that students who are fluent in English go into the language designation of the regular English program in the mornings, specific to their ages, and then are mixed with the other children in the afternoon.

Nadeau observes, "We've achieved a very high level of interaction in getting along with one another. This community is very multilingual and multicultural, and it does have considerable racial tension. But the school is clean, neat, safe, and there are very few discipline problems."

Is there a status hierarchy in the school between students who are language minority children and those who are not? "Not to any significant degree," Nadeau replies. "Racist slurs, for instance, are not tolerated and children know the consequences. The entire program is geared towards kids working together and understanding one another's cultures. We have a counseling program that puts on a curriculum that is a required subject. Part of that curriculum is self-concept development and getting along with one another, respecting one another. In other schools, this sort of curriculum is saved usually for crisis intervention."

The Change Process

How did Nadeau and her staff work to change the school into its present environment? "There was a very negative situation at the school when I came," she responds, "but there was enough of a critical mass that wanted change. I took a big risk: I told the staff that the decision whether or not to change was not theirs, but *how* we would change would be their decision. Because I had done enough homework for the first six months I was there, I was able to give them enough data about how we were failing dramatically. I had enough people behind me to succeed, but I didn't let those who weren't behind me hold us back."

Nadeau carefully managed staff meetings so that, as she says, "ineffective people would be neutralized. We had to define consensus over and over, and I often had to stop the groups whenever somebody would want to take over. Pretty soon people understood they had permission to express their ideas; they understood they were not going to be manipulated or intimidated."

She adds, "Within six months we hammered out a program that we implemented the following September."

But some of Linda Vista's change process defies conventional wisdom about reorganizing schools. "We did this on a schoolwide basis," Nadeau says emphatically. "We did not start small, with a small group of people. Our decision from the beginning was: 'It's all or nothing.' "

Nadeau admits that the most resistant staff decided to leave the school, but a critical mass that led the movement for change influenced others until consensus was reached.

How big a group does she consider a critical mass? Reflecting a moment, Nadeau replies: "For us, I think it was about 50%. It wasn't a huge group, and it wasn't a majority at the time. The staff was divided into three groups, just as there always are when you want to implement change."

Nadeau describes the three groups as "those who were on the fence, those who wanted to move forward, and those who never changed."

She emphasizes that although those who refused to change ultimately left the staff, others reluctant to move forward were neutralized.

Today, she looks for a special type of teacher when hiring.

"Obviously, we look for strong teaching skills," she says, "but also we look for a risk-taker, a person who is very flexible, who gets along well with others, a professional." Finally, she adds that she seeks staff who can "live with ambiguity."

Nadeau is most emphatic about this final, somewhat unusual qualification. "Without an ability to live with ambiguity," she adds, "teachers could find this school very frustrating."

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COMMENTARY

THE debate about the legitimacy of integrating the language and culture of racial and ethnic minorities into mainstream curriculum continues in the literature and in schools. The issues range from whether bilingual education is a suitable way to teach children who enter school speaking a language other than English to whether the school curriculum should reflect perspectives of the cultural diversity that comprise America and its schools. Perhaps even more fundamental to these issues is the degree to which countless children are denied a sound or even a basic education simply because they are from a racial and/or ethnic group characterized as minority. This problem is significantly compounded when the children are poor and reside in single parent families (Johnson, 1988). These conditions, buried within outdated policies, procedures, and ideologies of schools, place many children at risk of school failure. In this commentary, I will focus on the following concerns which impact schooling of children in America: (1) how teachers' perceptions, expectations, and educational practices are influenced by children's race, culture, language, and social class, (2) the affects of these perceptions, expectations, and practices on student outcomes and (3) what schools can do to create positive experiences for children.

The literature abounds with studies demonstrating that students' race and social class have long been the basis for differential perceptions and expectations of student potential for success and differential instructional practices (Brookover, 1979; Brophy & Good, 1977; Rist, 1970). The role of multicultural education designed to reduce bias and raise expectations is also well documented (Banks, 1989; Grant & Sleeter, 1989). Not only are students' cultural differences generally not respected or embraced in the curriculum and most classroom practices, equal opportunity to learn is often denied. Although some schools' efforts to demonstrate respect for cultural diversity have improved somewhat in recent years, these are yet disgracefully inadequate due to mainstream America's unwillingness to endorse a more inclusive and accurate view of history. The culture of schools is generally based on white middle-class values and has not been quick to change in a manner that welcomes others who do not possess these accepted characteristics. Frequently, students who come to school with cultural characteristics that are different from those of the teacher and the school are perceived to be products of families that do not value education, less capable of learning, less worthy of quality instruction, and are relegated to low-level knowledge, poor instruction, and frequent ridicule (Johnson, 1991; Rist, 1970).

According to Brookover et al. (1982, p. 58), "Teacher expectations and evaluations of students' ability—present and future—are linked to student achievement in more than one way." First, there is a direct link between teacher expectations and evaluations of students through differing amounts and quality of instruction, time spent interacting with students, quality of materials, and a general lack of respect and acceptance. In short, high expectations for students result in more and better instruction; on the other hand, low expectations reduce the amount of instruction and attention provided students.

Second, an indirect link of expectations to achievement occurs through student learning characteristics or school climate. The norms, expectations, and attitudes held by students come from their perceptions of what is appropriate in a given setting; in this case, the school. Brookover identifies three major aspects of student learning climate, each influenced by teacher expectations. Student academic norms relate to appropriate behavior with respect to academics as defined by group norms among students and include prevailing standards for emphasis on grades, amount of time devoted to homework, and the importance of homework compared to nonacademic activities. These variations in academic norms are influenced by expectations and are related to student achievement (Brookover, et al., 1982).

Self-concept of academic ability, another aspect of the learning climate, functions as a necessary but not sufficient condition for high academic achievement. Brookover notes that to achieve, a certain amount of confidence and belief in one's ability to perform is necessary. Students do not achieve well if they think they can't, but believing they can does not guarantee that they will achieve (Johnson, Brookover, & Farrell, 1991). Many students with high academic self-concepts do not do well in school. In general, according to Brookover and his colleagues, the student's confidence in his or her ability to succeed in school is related to past experiences in school and to teachers' expectations for their achievement. Students whose teachers hold high expectations for their performance demonstrate greater confidence in their abilities as learners than students who have experienced a history of low expectations. The student's perception of teacher expectations is a strong predictor of the child's belief in his/her ability to be successful academically, thus affecting overall academic achievement.

A third aspect of the student learning climate is academic sense of futility or hopelessness, which is strongly related

to achievement and influenced by teachers' expectations for the child. Students who experience high futility generally are low achievers. It is clear that teacher expectations and evaluations of students' ability to succeed are powerful factors in student performance; and the effects have a significantly greater influence on low income and/or minority students than middle class students (Brookover, 1979).

Although there is no magic formula that will guarantee success for every child in every classroom, there are proven research strategies that, if used, have a high likelihood of creating success in young people, especially those characterized as racial and language minorities. First, teachers must seek to understand and embrace the children's culture in order to help dispel racism and negative stereotypes held about minority children's ability to learn and the value their families place on education. Many educators do not believe that minority and poor families value the education of their child. The entire curriculum should contain representations of the rich cultural diversity which comprise our world. This diversity must be integrated throughout all curriculum disciplines and permit discussion of issues from varying cultural perspectives. A sincere acceptance of children's diversity can affect children's achievement in at least two ways. The first is that knowledge about students' culture will help teachers change their negative perceptions and expectations about them. More positive perceptions and higher expectations will ultimately prompt the teacher to teach more challenging material and demand higher quality work from these students. Better teaching and accountability for high performance will raise achievement. The second positive aspect is the direct affect on students' self-concept. When the school demonstrates to children that they are respected and capable learners and are expected to actively participate in class and perform at high levels, children ultimately develop more positive perceptions and higher expectations for themselves. This heightened self-concept motivates and empowers students to seek high performance as a group norm.

Secondly, schools must set the same standards of high academic performance for minority and poor students as they do for middle-class students. High expectations and high-quality work increse academic self-concept, reduce academic sense of futility, and raise student achievement.

Finally, educators must reach out to children's families and involve them in the educational process. The families of minority and low-income children are usually not involved in the school due to teachers' perceptions that these parents do not care about their children or would not know how to help them even if contacted. These parents care deeply about their children and would like to help if they were invited, made to feel welcome, and were told what they must do.

Schools make a difference in the way students perceive themselves as equal partners and capable learners in the school's social system. Through an understanding of cultural diversity, schools can fight against stereotyping and bigotry which influence the ways students are perceived and ultimately instructed. Professional development programs for school staff—along with the Effective Schools process which help schools develop the capacity for systemic change so that both quality and equity are present in educational programs—need to include strategies for integrating multicultural education into the daily curriculum so that each child sees his or her culture as important in the development and growth of our civilization and sees that it is also possible for them to make significant contributions as individuals.

The most important goal of professional development must be to help educators develop a firm belief that all children can learn the school's curriculum if we convey high expectations and actively teach them. We must reject long-held theories that genetics (see Jensen in Besag, 1971), family background, or culture (Coleman, 1966) create vast differences in children's ability to learn in school, and thus prevent the school from successfully educating children who come from minority and/or low socio-economic status homes. I take the position held by Brookover (1993, p. 6) that all children can learn whatever the culture requires of them, and that any person can learn except perhaps the obvious multiple handicapped. Evidence shows that almost 100% of all people in the world learn to speak and use the language it finds available and in common usage in the environment. I posit that learning a language is no less difficult than any of the other knowledge or sets of symbols that we seek to teach in schools.

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FOCUS IN CHANGE is published quarterly (Fall, Winter, Spring, Summer) for Members of the National Center for Effective Schools. For membership information, please consult the insert provided in this issue or contact the National Center for Effective Schools, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1025 W. Johnson St., Madison, WI 53706. Telephone: (608) 263-4730.

The development of this publication was supported in part by a grant from the Spencer T. and Ann W. Olin Foundation and by the Wisconsin Center for Education Research, University of Wisconsin-Madison.

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